

# White Sands Test Facility's *Passport to Health* a huge success

By **Cheerie R. Patneaude**

Safety and Total Health Day started out as a beautiful morning and continued that way for the employees at White Sands Test Facility.

A large parking lot was transformed into a festive tent city, where booths, vendors, and WSTF and White Sands Complex employees converged. From an unusual-looking Jeopardy host who quizzed employees with questions such as “How long does it take a hydrazine Inter-scan to react to low, hazardous levels of hydrazine?” or “How often should you get a tetanus booster?” to a real-time burn conducted by the WSTF Fire Department, WSTF employees were on the lookout to learn more about safety and health.

During the planning stage for this year’s Safety and Total Health Day, the committee was adamant in creating a day worth remembering. Co-chairs Barry Plante and Dave Loyd said of the event, “We wanted to establish a theme that entailed our commitment to safety and health and improve on the successes of last year’s event. When we designed our event, we wanted to reach out to the community in a joint venture into health.”

Because of this foresight, the committee established the *Passport to Health* theme. Committee members were: Jennifer Allred, Ralph Brown, Deb Chowning, Tim Davidson, Holger Fischer, Ray Gruben, Ron Lerdal, Miguel Maes, Ron Samaniego, Patsy Segura, and Larry Schuyler.

Eighteen activities ranging from the Doña Ana Sheriffs Department’s “Con-vincer” to *Beware of Snakes* presenter Doug Burkett, were ongoing, while seventeen safety and health vendor booths drew the participants under the tents to hear opinions on metatarsal guards and

diabetic blood sugar levels to flu shots and stress massages. The *Passport to Health* theme inspired a printed passport where activities and booths were listed along with the times and content of the presentations. Under one of the tents, the Voluntary Protection Program Keystone Committee asked participants questions such as, “Where do you get the locks for Lock Out/Tag Out work?” before employees earned a chance at spinning the wheel of fortune.

Many of WSTF Safety and Total Health Day participants commented on the day. Pleddie Baker said of the event,

“The Committee did a fantastic job putting something together like this. I have had that job, and I know how much effort it takes. It was outstanding!” Baker, who scheduled the NASA Benefits of Space trailer, said that he had more than 480 visitors to the trailer during the day.

The event boasted astronauts Steve Smith and Jeff Ashby who touted WSTF’s stand-down day for safety and health as “a remarkable accomplishment for the site.” Ashby went on to say that when he was given the opportunity to travel to WSTF, he enthusiastically accepted. Stressing the safety and health theme during one of his presentations, Smith said that even if his neighbors thought of him as a “geek,” he still paid attention to the right safety gear at home. He said his neighbors probably wondered about him decked out in mask, hearing protection, and goggles just to mow his lawn, but wearing safety gear at home was “just as important as it is on the Orbiter.” Smith said that he was so “impressed by the work WSTF does for the space program,” that he would like to bring his wife to see the emphasis that WSTF places on his safety.

At the end of the day, 600 people left WSTF more educated about their safety and more considerate of their health than they were at the beginning of the day. Next year’s challenge will be to exceed this year’s successful Safety and Total Health Day. ■



WSTF employees visit the Benefits of Space trailer.

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## Only you can assure your safety, audiences told

By **Mary Peterson**

Risk is a part of life, but don’t take foolish chances. No one else can keep you safe. You are responsible for you.

These were the recurring themes of the keynote address and featured speakers for Safety & Total Health Day, led by Center Director George Abbey who reminded listeners once again that safety is paramount in everything we do at the space center, saying, “You [the workforce] represent our most critical resource.”

To further illustrate JSC’s concern, Col. John Casper paraded a total of 51 people across the stage, representing each lost workday case reported since the first of the year. It drove the point home. Illness and injury are not merely statistics. They are people-your coworker, your friend, you.

Dr. Robert Conn, creator and executive director of SmartRisk Foundation, based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada,

returned not only as keynote speaker this year, but also to oversee the specially arranged production of his HEROES presentation, which would be shown at Gilruth Center to some 2,200 Houston area teenagers. His message, however, applied to everyone.

Opening with the statement that has become his mantra, Conn said, “The word ‘accident’ is described in the dictionary as ‘an unavoidable act of fate.’ But, accidents are avoidable, preventable occurrences. Most, 90 percent in fact, can be prevented,” he said.

A former trauma room surgeon and part of an organ transplant team, Conn became deeply affected by his work, especially when he realized that many of the hearts he salvaged came from living, yet brain-dead, young people, and that, in his words, “It didn’t have to happen.” That was the genesis of his plan to educate and, he hoped, preserve as many teenagers as he could from traumatic,

life-altering injury or death.

Conn believes deeply that setting rules and preaching safety do not work – not for teens, not for anyone. But, he also believes just as passionately that a few simple “smart risk” choices can make the difference in protecting yourself from danger and possible death. This also means not going beyond your “stupid line,” that invisible demarcation between good sense and sheer folly. Specifically, the choices between smart risk and stupid risk are:

- **Buckle up:** Whether in a car, a plane, skydiving, or any activity requiring a belt, use it.
- **Drive sober:** Don’t drive while impaired, whether from drugs, alcohol, a chemical reaction, or the use of a cell phone.
- **Look first:** Always be aware of your surroundings and where you’re going, whether at a railroad crossing, street, water you’re about to dive into, or any unfamiliar territory. Assess potential dangers first.

- **Wear the gear:** Safety equipment such as helmets, life jackets, PPE, etc. are effective only if you use them.
- **Get trained:** In both work and recreation, be sure you are trained and understand the safety considerations of what you are about to do. Too many people don’t know what to do in a crisis until it arises.

Conn also urged everyone to take first aid training. Statistics have shown that those who have such training are far less likely to be victims of preventable injuries.

The doctor closed his remarks with this candid reminder, “Frankly, we’d do anything we could if we thought it would keep you safe. But there isn’t anything we can do. You’re in control. It’s your choice. It’s your body. It’s your responsibility. It is now and always will be, as long as you live. All we can do is give you the facts and leave the choices up to you.” ■

